



# The Figures of Adam and Eve in the Old Polish Apocrypha of the New Testament

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**Abstract:** This article seeks to analyse excerpts of Old Polish apocryphal texts of the New Testament that refer to the figures of Adam and Eve. Though it might seem that the first parents are marginal characters in the New Testament writings, comparative studies of Old Polish translations and their Latin source text show that they play a significant role in the context of soteriology and exegesis. In the article, selected excerpts from the Old Polish apocrypha have been juxtaposed with translation source texts, followed by an interpretation of decisions made by a given translator regarding the use of the figures of Adam and Eve in a given medieval Polish text. This has provided grounds for creating the Adam – Jesus and Eve – Mary typology and explaining the nature of the first parents' sin and its role in the work of salvation.

**Keywords:** Adam, Eve, Old Polish apocrypha, New Testament, sin of the first parents, soteriology

The figures of Adam and Eve have played an important role in the biblical story of man and the history of salvation. Their trespassing of God's commandment resulted in humankind's lost opportunity to live a happy life in Eden, marked by the burden of the original sin. The history of the first parents does not end with the Book of Genesis, though. It was continued in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ (see Dekert 2007; Szlaga 1975, 85–96; Filipowicz 2011, 61–73) described in the Gospels and earlier and later in apocryphal texts.

The story of Adam and Eve's sin and their contribution to the history of man's salvation has been crucial storyline elements and a theological context for authors/translators of Old Polish biblical-apocryphal narratives. In the material available on the website of the project Apocrypha,<sup>1</sup> Adam or Eve are mentioned over 20 times (in six of the nine texts, namely, *Ewangelia Nikodema* [EN],<sup>2</sup> *Historija Trzech Kroli* [HTK],

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This article was prepared as part of a grant from the National Science Centre (project no. 2017/26/E/HS2/00083): “The Origins of Polish Language and Religious Culture in the Light of the Medieval Apocrypha of the New Testament. Universal Tool for Research on Polish Apocryphal Texts.”

- <sup>1</sup> Created as part of the grant from the National Science Centre; project no. 2017/26/E/HS2/00083: “The Origins of Polish Language and Religious Culture in the Light of the Medieval Apocrypha of the New Testament. Universal Tool for Research on Polish Apocryphal Texts,” executed between 2018 and 2023 under the supervision of Prof. UAM Dorota Rojszczak-Robińska, PhD.
- <sup>2</sup> The text of EN, as in HTK, and SCh, is found in the handwritten code called *Code of Laurentius a Lasco* in the collection of the National Library in Warsaw, reference code 3040 III.

*Rozmyślanie przemyskie [RP]*,<sup>3</sup> *Sprawa chędogo o męce Pana Chrystusowej [SCh]*, *Żywot Pana Jezusa Krysta [ŻPJK]*,<sup>4</sup> and *Żywot świętej Anny [ŻSA]*<sup>5</sup>.<sup>6</sup>

The Old Polish biblical-apocryphal narratives are an important element of the literary (and linguistic) landscape of the turn of the Renaissance. Their role in the shaping of the (Old) Polish culture, writing, and language has been repeatedly stressed by researchers. Maria Adamczyk wrote that in terms of their content, not only did the apocrypha correspond to the Bible or different previous non-canonical texts, but they also reflected a specific world view of their creators, as well as the objectives of the social systems that these authors lived in and created in (Adamczyk 1980, 6–7). The consequence was the rejection of apocryphal literature by Catholics following the Council of Trent, resulting in the previously popular texts being marginalised or even destroyed (Adamczyk 1980, 10; Celichowski 1890, 5–6).

Furthermore, the Old Polish apocrypha are related to other cultural trends (particularly the literature and art of the *Slavia Orthodoxa*<sup>7</sup> culture), as well as to other fields of art (such as visual arts or theatre) (Smoleń 1960, 123–43; Smoleń 1962, 211–343; Kopania 2004, 7–48; Bryłka 2021, 255–68). After all, one should bear in mind at least one more important role that non-canonical narratives have played in the history of Polish culture, namely, their impact on the development of the Polish religious language. The content that has been ignored by the Church is intertwined in the apocrypha with fragments of prayers (such as the *Lord's Prayer*) (Masłej 2016a; Masłej 2016b, 133–41), the Book of Psalms (or parts thereof) (Rojszczak-Robińska 2023, 126–47), or the Gospels (Leńczuk 2016, 123–31; Masłej 2020, 91–103; Stelmach 2020b, 145–66; Rojszczak-Robińska 2020, 271 – 291; Stelmach 2023, 75–90).

Apocryphal stories are valuable material for linguistic analyses<sup>8</sup> because due to their multilayeredness (Mika 2013, 131–45; Mika 2015, 87–104), they allow linguists to conduct research on Old Polish grammar and stylistics (Krażyńska 1995, 45–52; Kozaryn 2001; Mika 2000, 229–40; Rojszczak-Robińska 2014, 123–44; Kołodziej

3 It is the biggest Slavic Apocryphon (the work has 844 pages – three pages of the introduction and several pages of the ending are missing). The code, which includes *RP*, is stored at the National Library in Warsaw, reference code 8024 III.

4 Old print from the first half of the 16th century. Published in 1522, twice by two publishing houses in Kraków – one run by Hieronim Wietor and Jan Haller. By the end of the mid-16th century, two more editions of this work had been published. For more information on this subject, see <https://apocrypha.amu.edu.pl/elabo#zpjik>.

5 Edition from c. 1532, published by the publishing house of Hieronim Wietor. *ŻSA* is found in the code under ref. code Cim.0.147, presently kept at the Jagiellonian Library.

6 They are not mentioned in *List Lentulusa* (Letter of Lentulus), *Karta Rogawskiego* (Rogawski Folio) and *Rozmyślania dominikańskie* (Dominican Meditations).

7 See, for instance, Naumow 1994, 133–39; Adamczyk 2005, 165–74; Bartmiński 2016, 43–75; Īvaškiv 2016, 35–42.

8 A complete bibliography of works devoted to the Old Polish apocrypha can be found on the website: <https://apocrypha.amu.edu.pl/elabo?id=4>. Due to its length, I give the titles of selected studies in the following footnotes.

2016, 143–55). Their complex structure also offers the possibility to determine how an author of a target text worked with the source text (Dobrzeński 1969, 196–521; Rojszczak-Robińska 2012; Rojszczak-Robińska 2016; Rojszczak-Robińska 2018, 81–92; Siwińska 2015, 113–32; Rojszczak-Robińska, Deskur and Stelmach 2021).

In scientific studies, much room has been dedicated to only some characters of the biblical-apocryphal narratives. These are predominantly figures known from the New Testament, namely, Jesus, Mary, Judas, and Mary Magdalene (for instance, see Mika 2002; Krawiecka 2006; Woźniak 2007; Parzych-Blakiewicz and Wojtkowski 2012). This article seeks to analyse and interpret selected fragments of the above-mentioned apocrypha that refer to Adam or Eve. Since the context (be it textual, source, or theological) is significant for understanding the excerpts in question, in this paper, I address narrative threads *de facto* related to other characters and events where Adam and Eve are mentioned.<sup>9</sup> This is because aside from *EN* and *ŻPJK*, in the New Testament Apocrypha, none of the first parents participates in the described events. They are referred to as figures, specific types intended for particular extra-literary purposes and not for building the plot.

## 1. Eve

The apocrypha excerpts that mention the first mother, Eve, are over three times fewer than those referring to Adam. However, the role of the first woman is diminished in these texts. Her character is used, among others, as an example of a female because of whom humanity has lost everything it had from the moment of its creation. And so, for instance, in *ŻPJK*, in chapter titled “Panny Maryjej, dziewice błogosławionej, lekkie, krom której boleści uśpienie” [Virgin Mary, Blessed Virgin without any pain falling asleep], we read, among others, about 12 stars that Mary’s crown was adorned with:

Wtórą gwiazdę pierwszy rodzicy w jej koronę włożyli, gdy rzekli: „Wszechmogący Boże, błogosławionys ty i matka twoja. Zaprawdę ona dostojna jest, aby z duszą i z ciałem była uwielbiona, bo onę chwalemy, iż jest wyjęta od przeklęcia Jewinego dla grzechu pierworodnego, bo i my, byśmy cie byli nie rozgniewali, z duszą i z ciałem w raju bylibysmy ostawieni.”

[The second star was put in her crown by the first parents, saying, ‘Almighty God, blessed are you and your mother. Indeed, she is worthy of being worshipped, soul and body, because we praise her, as she was not affected by Eve’s curse caused by the original sin;

<sup>9</sup> For the purpose of the Apocrypha project, the following definition of threads was adopted: they are “narrative events centred around one character or several characters distinguished from the total number of characters” (as cited in Wójcicka 2018, 295–99).

likewise, had we not enraged you, God, we would have been left in the paradise, soul and body.’] (*ŻPJK* 122r/19–24)<sup>10</sup>

The first people after angels to have the honour of decorating Mary’s crown are Adam and Eve. This is followed by figures or groups of characters in the sequence in which they appear on the pages of the Holy Scripture and in the tradition of the Church (e.g. the Church Fathers, the saints, the blessed). The three final stars are fixed to the crown by the persons of the Holy Trinity – the Holy Spirit, the Son of God, and God the Father.<sup>11</sup> In the above-cited excerpt, two matters are important: Adam and Eve jointly putting the crown on and the address to Jesus.

The joint nature of cherishing Mary proves that they both have been saved, which is mentioned exclusively in Old Polish texts in the above fragment. In the words addressed to Christ, Adam and Eve emphasise Mary’s uniqueness. She gained the right to be taken to heaven, soul and body due to being “wyjęta od przeklęcia Jewinego dla grzechu pierworodnego” [excluded from Eve’s curse of the original sin]. Adam’s and Eve’s personal disobedience to God has brought the hereditary ‘curse’ of the original sin on humanity. The consequence of the first parents’ sin was, among others, their exile from paradise and deprivation of immortality (*Żurek* 2016, 139–53; *Pietras* 1999, 33). Nonetheless, the most important repercussion was the emergence of the original sin, which means “a deprivation of original holiness and justice.” (*CCC* 405) The words that the excerpt ends in prove that the first people became aware that the loss of eternal life was a consequence of their actions and not the ill will of the Creator. To some extent, their address brings to mind words of children who, having been punished by their parents for disobedience, notice the rightness of the previously formulated prohibition. Like children, Adam and Eve realise after the fact that everything God did for them stemmed from fatherly love.

In the Old Polish apocrypha, Eve is juxtaposed with Mary several times. This is done, for instance, by the author of *HTK* in the passage that describes the liturgical celebrations of Christmas:

A gdy już będzie teże po onej mszy, gdy odśpiewają, tedy wszyscy ludzie obojego rodzaju, tako męzczyzna jako żeńczyzna, ktoregokolwiek języka albo wiary są, ci wszyscy w onej cyrekwii śpiewają onę antyfonę po łacinie, co sie tak rozumie po polsku: Tenci jest dzień, który udziałał Pan. Dzisiaj Pan na skaranię ludu swego wejrzał, a odkupienie posłał. Dzisiaj

<sup>10</sup> The citations from the Old Polish apocrypha are provided according to a scheme adopted at [www.apocrypha.amu.edu.pl](http://www.apocrypha.amu.edu.pl), that is, first an abbreviated title, e.g. *ŻPJK*, followed by the page number (122r), and the numbers of the lines after a slash.

<sup>11</sup> For a detailed description of the worshipping of Mary, see chapter “Panny Maryjei, dziewice błogosławionej, lekkie, krom ktorej boleści uspienie” [Virgin Mary, Blessed Virgin without any pain falling asleep] (<https://apocrypha.amu.edu.pl/texts/item?code=%C5%BBPJK&startCardNumber=120v&startVerseNo=26&endCardNumber=123v&endVerseNo=15&mode=transcription&grammar=false>).

śmierć, którą niewiasta sprawiła, rozumiej Ewa, żeńczyzna, rozumiej dziewica Maryja, od-daliła. Dzisiaj Bog człowiekiem się stał jest. Ten, czym był, został, a czym nie był, to wziął.

[And when the mass will be over, when they will have sung, then all people of both sexes, men and women alike, regardless of the tongue they speak or their beliefs, everyone in that church will sing the antiphon in Latin, which in Polish goes, ‘This is the day made by the Lord. Today, Lord saw the ill fate of his people and sent them redemption. Today, the death caused by the woman, that is, Eve, is driven away by another woman, that is, Virgin Mary. Today, God has become human. He remained what he has been and received what he has not been’]. (*HTK 229r/13–229v/8*)

The cited excerpt is based on the antiphon for the day of the Annunciation to the Blessed Virgin Mary, which in Latin reads as follows.

Haec est dies quam fecit dominus hodie dominus afflictionem populi sui respexit et redemptionem misit hodie mortem quam femina intulit femina fugavit hodie deus homo factus id quod fuit permansit et quod non erat assumpsit ergo exordium nostrae redemptionis devote recolamus et exultemus dicentes gloria tibi domine. (“*Cantus 002997*,” n.d.)

Attention should be paid to the way the lines about the beginning and the end of sin were translated. While in the Latin version of the antiphon, we read, “death caused by a woman was driven away by a woman,” in the Polish version, we notice the names of the women added by the translator. The Old Polish author complements the translation in a manner that leaves no doubt that Mary, who through the Creator’s deed will give birth to the Son of God, drove death brought by Eve away from humankind. The author of the antiphon stresses the dissonance between the disobedience of Eve and the humility and open heart of Mary, who faithfully accepted God’s plan. The antiphon emphasises that what every human who lived after Eve and inherited from her is death. In the Church, this thought has been present at least since the time of Saint Augustine. As Antoni Żurek notices in his article, “Ewa – pierwsza kobieta w świetle pism św. Augustyna,” sin “has affected not only the first parents but, like an inheritance from parents, their entire offspring, too” (Żurek 2016, 149–50). An element of this inheritance was the loss of the body’s immortality – only the soul remains immortal. It was only Mary’s obedience that allowed for the existence of the three things listed in the antiphon, namely, the salvation of humankind by God, the alleviation of the burden of death from people, and the adoption of human nature by God. These three conditions have been fulfilled in one person – Jesus Christ.

A similar comparison is used by the author of *RP*. In chapter titled “Dokonał się prolog a poczyną się żywot błogosławionej dziewicy Maryje, a napirwej jako <z> swej rady posłał anioła Gabryjela k niej z niebios” [The prologue was accomplished and the life of the Blessed Virgin Mary begins, and first as according to God’s decree

he sent to her the angel Gabriel from heaven], which starts Part II of the apocryphon, we read:

Dziwkę nawiędzę a czynię ją matką, dając jej imię porodicielka, wszakoż ostanie w całości dziewicze. A także będzie matka, jemuż ja – synu Bożemu – ociec, bo tem skutkiem chcę wszemu światu pomoc. Juże Jewa nie będzie zwana [ale] matka wszech na świecie będących, ale tej dziewicy będzie dawna chwała. Z tej cokoli będzie dobrego, będą i na niebie, i na ziemi dzieci. Tegodla, anjele, to poselstwo od Świętej Trojce przyjąw, nieś ku niebieskie dziewicy.

[I shall come to a young woman and make her a mother, naming her a parent though she will remain a virgin. Hence, she will be a mother to him, the Son of God, and I shall be the father, for in this way I want to help the entire world. Eve shall not be called anymore the mother of everyone who lives in the world; instead, glory shall be given to this virgin. If anything good comes of her, it will be children in heaven and on earth. For this reason, angel, having received this message from the Holy Trinity, carry it to the holy virgin.]. (RP 47/11–23)

The passage cited above contains the words addressed by God to Archangel Gabriel. He tells his messenger what choosing Mary as the mother of God would entail. She would be referred to as the mother (Pol. *porodicielka*), while her offspring would be exceptionally numerous. This is because she would not only be the mother of Jesus but also of all the people in the world, thus taking this title away from Eve. Therefore, this would be the beginning of a New Order, a New Law, a New Covenant. That what used to be in the Old Order would be replaced by the Good News. Eve's deathly legacy would give way to eternal life that humans have received owing to Mary's obedience. What is more, although Mary would give birth, she would be the only mother in history to keep her virginity.

In the examples above, Eve's attitude, her legacy, and the tradition of explaining the nature of the first parents' sin and the original sin that have grown over centuries in the preaching and the writings of the Church Fathers constitute a background for emphasising Mary's contribution to humankind and her exceptional place in the divine plan of salvation.

In another and final excerpt from the text on Eve, her character serves as the "anti-model" of a woman, and so do some other women from the pages of the Old Testament:

Woła tu Remigiusz rzekąc: O, kako szkodliwie jest dostojnemu człowieku <pospolstwo> złych ludzi, a nawięcej złych niewiast! Bo to pospolstwo przyprawilo, iż ten zaprzął Pana, ktory przedtym poznał Bożego Syna. Bo i ktorego nawiętszego męża od początku świata niewiasta ku kłopotu nie przyprawila? Od pirwego człowieka począwszy, Adama – Jewa, Dalida – Samsona, Betsabee – Dawida, Mo[r]abit<k>a – Salomon<a> a dziewczka

wrotna – Piotra. Przetoż <o>bwyłk dziwno dyjabeł święte męże zdradzić niewieścim przyprawienim, a nawięcej ty, ktorzy sie dzierzą ku dworam książęcym albo prełacskim. Otoć Piotr jedno dw<o>ru przyszedł, a tamo moc swego uma i swej siły stracił a Jesukrysta zaprzął.

[Here, Remigius cries, ‘Oh, how harmful a company of evil people is for a dignified man, and the worst one is that of evil maidens! For being with them prompted Peter, who earlier had come to know the Son of God, to deny Him. For which of the holiest of men, since the beginning of the world, has not been led astray by a woman? Since the first man, Adam by Eve, Samson by Delilah, David by Bathsheba, Solomon by a Moabite woman, and Peter by the girl by the door. Therefore, somehow the devil has had the habit of deceiving holy men using a female’s inducement, and most zealously those who stay at courts or churches. Peter only arrived at the court (of the high priest – author’s note), and there, he lost his reason and power, and denied Jesus]. (RP 693/2–21)

In the description of the biblical scene of Peter denying Jesus, the author of *RP* recalls the words of Remigius that suggest that the greatest threat to a man is the company of evil women. The author of the apocryphon expands this thought with an excerpt from *Vita Columbani* by Jonas of Bobbio,<sup>12</sup> which contains examples of a woman’s harmful role in the life of a man:

Bo i ktorego nawięszego męża od początku świata niewiasta ku kłopotu nie przyprawila? Od pirwego człowieka począwszy, Adama – Jewa, Dalida – Samsona, Betsabee – Dawida, Mo[r]abit<k>a – Salomon<a> a dziewczka wrotna – Piotra.

[For which of the holiest of men, since the beginning of the world, has not been led astray by a woman? Since the first man, Adam by Eve, Samson by Delilah, David by Bathsheba, Solomon by a Moabite woman, and Peter by the girl by the door].

Since this citation has been used to comment on the scene of Peter denying Jesus, the example of the girl at the gate and Saint Peter was added to it for context. In chronological order, it lists biblical pairings whose relationships end badly for the male. Firstly, the case of Eve is mentioned, which can be applied to every woman, according to Saint Augustine (Żurek 2016, 151). In this case, the examples from the Old Testament, including the figure of Eve, evidently serve as a historical-literary determinant of the righteousness of the opinion of the Church Fathers, claiming that women contribute to the fall of men. It is worth noting that as a factor that compromises men’s will and reason, the author of *RP* lists having power (David, Salomon) or, at least, being close to the court (Peter in the high priest’s court).

<sup>12</sup> The fragment was identified for the first time as the source of *RP* in the course of grant works.



## 2. Adam

As the character of Eve serves as a rhetorical figure, an antithesis of Mary, Adam is not only juxtaposed with Christ in exegetic or catechetical texts; he is also the protagonist of events described on the pages of one of the apocryphal texts, namely, *EN*.

As the first father of humans and one of the key representatives of the Old Covenant, Adam got to hell<sup>13</sup> expecting the coming of Christ. The events from Part II of *EN* provide an account of the story of Jesus descending to Sheol, from where he led towards the eternal light Adam, Eve, patriarchs, prophets, and the just people who did not have the opportunity to learn the Good News when alive. Adam, the prophets, and the patriarchs were the first ones to notice that the resurrected Christ was approaching the Abyss. Joyfully, they called, “Światłość ta rozmnożyciel wiekuiestej światłości jest, ktory nam obiecał posłać wiekuiestą światłość swoję” [This light is the multiplicator of eternal light who promised he would send his eternal light to us] (*EN* 137v/12–15). These words are not accidental, and it was not by chance that Adam’s name was included there. It was by his doing that humanity descended to the darkness of sin, and it was he who bereft it of access to the heavenly light, condemned to live in darkness (Augustinus, *C. Jul. op. imp.* II 57 [CSEL 85/1, 205] and Augustinus, *C. Jul. op. imp.* II 194, [CSEL 85/1, 309–10] as cited in Żurek 2016, 147). God the Father sent his Son to remedy what Adam had destroyed so that people would be brought back to the eternal light. After all, Christ himself was referred to as “a light to lighten the Gentiles” (Luke 2:32 KJV) by Simeon during an offering in the temple (Luke 2:29–32 KJV).

All the prophets, patriarchs, and saints in Sheol knew that Christ would come to earth and save people from sin. Among them, Adam was likely the only one who knew that Jesus would come for them, too, down to hell, to lead them to the heavenly glory. He reveals this knowledge after John the Baptist’s confession that Jesus was baptised by him in the River Jordan:

A gdyż to usłyszał pirwszy ociec Adam, ociec nasz, iż w Jordanie okrzczon był, rozumiej Jesus, zawołał do syna swego, Seta, mówiąc jemu: „Powiedz synom twym, patryjarchom i prorokom, wszystko, cośkole słyszał od Michała Archanjoła, gdym cie słał do uliczek rajskich, aby prosił Boga, iżciby posłał anjoła swego, ezbyć dał oleju z drzewa miłosierdzia ku pomazaniu ciała mego, gdym był niemocen.”

[And when the first father, Adam, heard that Jesus had been baptised in the River Jordan, he called to his son, Seth, “Tell your sons, the patriarchs and the prophets everything you have heard from Archangel Michael when I sent you to the gates of paradise to ask God to send his angel to give you the oil from the tree of mercy to mark my body with when I was ill]. (*EN* 138v/17–139r/7)

<sup>13</sup> A reference to limbo, hell. See CCC 405.



In the above excerpt, there is a reference to the Old Testament apocryphon that tells about the life of Adam and Eve (*Vita Adae et Evae*<sup>14</sup>). In various editions, its pages render the story of the fall of the first humans, their life outside the paradise garden, and their efforts to survive without divine care. It also provides an account of the deaths of Adam and Eve. The description of Adam's illness and death is remarkably detailed. It contains, among others, the story about Seth and Eve travelling to the paradise gates for the sacred tree's oil. Instead of the oil, Archangel Michael offers Seth twigs from a cedar tree, a pine tree, and a cypress, with which he then makes a wreath for Adam's head. It is a symbolic reference to Adam regaining his dignity as the first man after the coming of Christ. Aside from the intertwined twigs, Seth received information from Michael on the coming of the Saviour who would heal Adam and all humankind from sin.<sup>15</sup> These very scenes from the Old Testament apocryphon are referred to in the narrative of *EN*. Adam, Eve, and Seth can be considered the first people who knew that Christ would come to earth to remove the stain of the original sin and baptise humanity with the Holy Spirit.

Overjoyed at the prospect of freedom, in his own name and also in the name of everyone liberated by Jesus from the depths of hell, Adam addressed God in these words,

Bądź powyszon, Panie, iżeś mię przyjął, a nie dałeś nieprzyjaciołom moim nade mną lubości. Śpiewajcie Panu Bogu wszyscy święci jego a wyznawajcie pamiątkę świętowości jego. Iże gniew w rozgniewaniu jego, a żywot <w> dobrej wolej jego.

[Be praised, Lord, for you have accepted me and you have not favoured my enemies. Sing for the Lord, all his saints, remember his sanctity. There is anger when he rages, and there is life when his will is good] (*EN* 146r/19–146v/5).

The cited passage is an excerpt from Psalm 30. The enemy Adam speaks of using the words of the Psalm is naturally Satan, who brought death to the first father and, hence, to all humans. As noted above, it was the consequence of people inheriting the original sin. Adam thanks Jesus for saving humankind from the threat of dying in Sheol through his death.

Further on, we read that the Lord blessed Adam and all saints with the sign of the cross and then, holding Adam by the hand, led everyone out of hell (see *EN* 146v/18–147r/5). This scene, which closely corresponds with biblical iconography, is

<sup>14</sup> Which late-medieval issue titled *De creatione Adae et formatione Evae ex costa eius* served as the basis for the Old Polish Old Testament apocryphon *Historyja barzo cudna o stworzeniu nieba i ziemie* penned by Krzysztof Pussman. For more information on this subject see Dobrzycki 1911, 286–99; Adamczyk 2005, 165–74; Stelmach 2020a; Osiewicz and Wydra 2022.

<sup>15</sup> Another source of Adam's knowledge of the coming of Christ could be the teachings of Logos in paradise, cf. Pietras 1999, 27.

very symbolic. God shows that everyone who repents sincerely and atones for sins will have eternal life in heaven. Salvation can involve Adam, too, the man with whom humanity's enslavement by sin began. In *EN*, it is stressed that Christ has fulfilled his Father's will through Adam by coming to earth, taking human form, and dying as a man.<sup>16</sup>

In other Old Polish apocrypha, the figure of Adam is employed mainly for exegesis, as in, for instance, the vast excerpt of *RP*, the analysis of which is included in Wojciech Stelmach's article (2022, 144–55). He shows the similarity between how the nature of the first father's sin is explained and the sequence of deeds done by Satan to Christ fasting in the desert.

Moreover, in the Old Polish biblical-apocryphal narratives (*RP* and *ŻPJK*), one can find passages stating that Christ's blood is the offering for Adam's sin:

Miły Jesus odpowiedział barzo łaskawie swej matce rzekąc: „Matko, pirwy człowiek rozniewał mego Ojca, iż wyciągnął rękę ku jego jabłku, a przeto ja mam ninie mękę cirpieć i dać moje obie ręce targać na krzyżu Żydom, aż sie w nich każda żyła starga, abowim je mają rozciągnąć, aż będą z krzyżem rowne.

[Dear Jesus replied very gracefully to his mother, saying, ‘Mother, the first man enraged my Father by reaching for his apple, and for this reason, I am now to suffer passion and allow the Jews to tear both my arms apart on the cross until every vein is torn apart in them, for I am to spread my arms until they are wide open on the cross]. (*RP* 504/10–19)

In the cited excerpt from *RP*, in his conversation with his mother, the Son of God indicates that the source of his future suffering is the eating of the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil by Adam. Just like the first father's hand reached for the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Christ's arms would be spread as far apart as possible on the tree of the cross to amend the detrimental consequences of Adam's carelessness. The prefiguration of Adam in Christ is used once again (see Pietras 1999, 38).

In turn, in the 16th-century *ŻPJK*, Mary plays a vital role in the context of not only the birth of the Saviour but also his death. This is shown, for example, in the scene of a conversation held by Archangel Gabriel and God before the former is sent with the Good News:

Tę tajemnicę napirwej wzjawił Gabryjelowi Archanjołowi, przez ktorego sie moc Boża rozumie. Przeto wezwawszy ji, rzekł jemu: „Idzi do miłosnej panny naszej, Maryjej, Jozefowi poślubionej, a objaw jej, iż Syn moj jedyny pożąda śliczności jej, matką ją sobie obiera.

<sup>16</sup> As Marek Starowieyski writes, *EN* in the Middle Ages was considered a historical document on the one hand and used for religious purposes on the other hand. It was rewritten using sacred saints and used during the mass. Moreover, its content was employed to compose homilies, theological treatises, and passion drama (Starowieyski and Appel 2003, 635).

A mow jej, by go wesoło w swoj żywot przyjęła, bo przez nią ludzkie plemię chcę zbawić i nieposłuszeństwa Adamowego zapamiętać. Już chce Syn moj jedyny z swego mocnego stolca na doł stąpić i zmiłować sie nad nimi przez swe naświętsze wcielenie.”

[He first revealed this secret to Archangel Gabriel, who is understood as the power of God. For this reason, having summoned him, he told him, ‘Go to our beloved virgin, Mary, the one betrothed to Joseph, and reveal to her that my only Son desires her beauty and chooses her for his mother. And tell her that she should receive him with joy into her womb, for I want to save mankind through her and forgive Adam’s disobedience. My only Son wants to already step from his mighty throne down to earth and show them mercy through his blessed incarnation’]. (*ŻPJK* 5v/22–31)

Yet again, attention is drawn to juxtaposing Mary with Eve and Christ with Adam. Just like Eve, who succumbed to the serpent’s suggestions and fulfilled its will, leading Adam to disobey God, Mary becomes a tool in the hands of God the Father but also in her Son’s by faithfully and joyfully accepting the incarnate word in her life.<sup>17</sup> For this reason, she participates in Jesus’s death in subsequent passages of this work. Furthermore, she makes decisions on the fate of humankind, too,<sup>18</sup> which is addressed by this excerpt of *ŻPJK*:

A tak, przyszedwszy anjoł do niej, mowił jej: „O panno naświętsza, powiedz Bogu Ojcu, ktora jest twa wola. Co chcesz, wybierz: śmierć czy li żywot syna twego? Jestli żywot obierzesz, wiedz, panno, iżci zbawienie wszytkiego świata zaginie i wszytko ludzkie pokolenie wiecznie musi być potępione i zatracone. Wszak wiesz, miła panno, iżci Bog Ociec za grzech Adamow inszej ofiary nie żąda, jedno krwie i śmierci swego i twego jedynego syna. A jużci na to przyzwolił Ociec niebieski i twój jedyny syn, i Duch Święty. Przyzwolili też na to wszytcy anjołowie, prorocy, pospołu patryjarchowie. A ty chcesz też na jego śmierć przyzwolić czy li nie?”

[Having come to Mary, the angel said to her, ‘Oh, blessed virgin, tell God the Father what you have decided. Choose what you wish: death or life of your son? If you choose life, you should know, maiden, that the salvation of the entire world would be lost and the entire mankind would be condemned and annihilated for ever and ever. You do know, dear maiden, that God the Father demands no other sacrifice for Adam’s sin, but the blood and death of your and his only son. The Father in heaven and your only son, and the Holy Spirit have agreed to this. All the angels, prophets, and patriarchs, too, have agreed to this. Do you want to allow for his death or not?’]. (*ŻPJK* 64v/32–65r/5)

<sup>17</sup> For instance, on Mary’s role in the act of salvation, see Mastalska 1999, 58–76.

<sup>18</sup> This is at odds with Mary’s image in the New Eve presented in Mastalska’s article (1999, 65–66). Hence, the different manner of presenting Mary’s role in the work of salvation by authors of Old Polish apocrypha seems quite new compared to other religious texts.

The scene presented above stems from the revelations Saint Bridget of Sweden received. Seeing his Son's passion during the prayer in Gethsemane, God convened a council in heaven and asked angels to tell him what he should do with Jesus in this suffering. They replied that he should send him to death since, otherwise, their sin would not be remedied. Then, God asked the same question to the patriarchs, the prophets, and the just who were in limbo. They gave a similar answer to that of the angels, arguing that the Creator would show his endless mercy in this way. The third one to receive this question was Mary. She was asked to choose between her Son's life and the life of all humankind. This took place because she was the mother of the Son of God, and, as the mother, she was allowed to decide on Jesus's life. After several attempts to cede the responsibility for this decision to God the Father, she eventually decides as follows,

Dam ja syna mego za występ i owoc żywota mego za grzech i winę, aby Bogu za krzywdę Adamową dosyć udziałał. A dlatego weźmiecież ji na śmierć, a ja z nim pospołu cierpieć będę za zbawienie ludzkie.

[I shall give up my son for the disobedience and the fruit of my womb for the sin and fault, so that he remedies the hurt done by Adam to God. Take his life and I shall share his suffering for the salvation of mankind] (*ŻPJK* 65r/22–25).

Above is an excerpt of *ŻPJK*, which refers to Mary's crown being decorated with 12 stars. Adam and Eve were the ones who adorned the crown with the first star, which is a parallel for the destinies of the first and the second Eve, the first and the second Adam. Further in the apocryphon, the figure of Adam appears again, this time singing a hymn praising Mary:

Dziesiąte przyjęli ją wszyscy święci Starego Zakonu, patrijarchowie i prorocy, którzy chwaląc ją śpiewali: „Tyś, Maryja, jednaczka człowieczego rodzaju, którąmy my przefigurowali i przepowiedzieli.” A wystąpiwszy, Adam wesele rzekł: „Ta jest kość z kości moich, przez tę wszystkim zbawienie jest nalezione. Ktorąm ja łaskę stracił, tę ta Maryja nalazła i przywrociła synom moim.”

[Tenthly, Mary was received by all the saints, patriarchs, and prophets of the Old Testament, who were singing praising her, 'You, Mary, are the mediator of the humankind whom we have proposed and foretold.' Having come forward, Adam said merrily, 'This is bone of my bone, through which salvation for all is found. The grace I have lost was found by Mary and returned to my sons.']. (*ŻPJK* 124v/35–125r/2)

The first one to speak of Mary is Adam. As we read, he speaks joyfully, “Ta jest kość z kości moich, przez tę wszystkim zbawienie jest nalezione, którąm ja łaskę stracił, tę ta Maryja nalazła i przywrociła synom moim” [This is bone of my bone,

through which salvation for all is found. The grace I have lost was found by Mary and returned to my sons.]. The first part of his utterance is a citation from the Gen 2:23. In the Holy Scripture, these words refer to Eve, who is a type of Mary. In these words, Adam not only points to this relationship between Eve and Mary but also to the fact that the Mother of God comes from humankind; she is a human, just like Adam. These words also stress the existence of a particular time bracket – Adam, the perpetrator of the original sin with the participation of Eve, welcomes Mary in heaven, as owing to her, every person can become saved. This is evident from the further part of the first man's utterance – the Mother of God found the grace Adam had lost, and she returned it to his sons (Mastalska 1999, 64–65). Bringing man back to God not by Christ but by his mother is a fully justified rhetorical tool. With Adam's words, the author stresses the role of the Mother of God in the history of salvation.

In some parts of the apocrypha, Adam's character is used as a reference point for later events. This is the case in *ŻSA* and *SCh*.

In the former, we read:

A przeto Anna święta, będąc wdową, tako była cnotliwego żywota, iż nad domnimanie ludzkie jej uczynki, obcowanie i żywot[a] daleko więcej były godne ku dziwowaniu. Ani sie też temu nie trzeba dziwować, gdy od czasow Jadama, ojca pirwego, nie naleziona taka niewiasta, którą by wybrał Bog wszechmogący, iżby była starą matką jego syna a matką matki Bożej.

[Therefore, as a widow, Saint Anne has lived a life so virtuous that her deeds, conduct, and life were far from human imagination and admirable. One should not be surprised by it, since from the times of Adam, the first father, no other virgin had been chosen by God almighty for his son's grandmother and the mother of the mother of God]. (*ŻSA* 18r/6–14)

It is clear from the content of *ŻSA* that Adam's times remain related to the times of Christ, specifically, the times of his grandmother, Saint Anne. It is claimed that since the time of Adam, no woman would have been chosen by God to be the grandmother of His Son and the mother of the Mother of God. Naturally, it is not the case that God previously chose Eve to serve this role. After all, if not for Eve, God would not have had to sacrifice his only Son. This is about stressing the uniqueness of Saint Anne, who, as her life shows, was the first woman from the beginning of the world's creation to be called to execute this grand plan of God. The grandmother of Christ is the origin of the sacred life of Mary and, therefore, the incarnation of the Son of God. Saint Anne's holiness manifested in her faithfulness to God, trust in His will, and reliance on His grace. The very same characteristics were found in Mary, the long-awaited daughter of Anne and Joachim. And as Mary was the child her parents longed, waited, and prayed for, Christ's birth was desired by all humankind.

In turn, *SCh* involves an exegesis of the hour of Jesus's death:

A gdy jest krzyżowan i umarł prze grzechy nasze – bo Adam po szostej godzinie, gdy zgrzeszył, głos Boży usłyszał, a przeto stało sie jest podług obrzęda, aby w krotki czas Adamowi, przestępcy, zamknion był raj, w któryz czas łotrowi pokutę strojącemu rajaska uliczka otworzona była – a od szostej godziny po wszystkim świecie ciemność sie uczyniła przez trzy godziny, aż do dziewiątej godziny.

[And once Jesus had been crucified and died for our sins, for Adam after six o'clock, when he sinned, heard the voice of God, and thus it came to being as is the custom, that after a short time, paradise was closed for Adam the perpetrator, and at the same time, the gate to paradise was opened for the robber seeking penance, and from six o'clock darkness fell around the world, which lasted for three hours until nine]. (*SCh* 115r/11–20)

Six is the time at which Adam broke God's commandment. At the very same hour, the gates of paradise closed for man. For this reason, Jesus gave up his spirit at six o'clock, reopening the door to salvation for the first of the converted sinners (*SCh* 115r/11–20) – Dismas the Penitent Thief, who confessed his sins while hanging with Jesus on the cross on Golgotha Hill, who was ensured salvation by dying Christ.

### 3. Adam and Eve

Considered an elaborated passion sermon, *SCh* mentions the figures of Adam and Eve in its first lines. This passage is an excerpt from a sermon on the causes of Jesus's death, which is linked by the preacher to the original sin of the first humans:

Jakoż święty Grzegorz mowi: A gdyż naszej pierwej rodziny, Adama i Jewy, grzech a niemoc była jest pycha, łakomstwo a nieposłusztwo, przez posłusztwo miano oprawiono być. A przeto, jakoż ku pierwemu członku doliczają, iż za pychę naszej pierwej rodziny nie mogło przez innego dosyćuczynienie być, jedno przez śmierność Jesuchrystowę, bo odrzucenie wszej służby a posłusztwa jest między sobą nierowne a przeciwne. A gdyż wszego posłusztwa odrzucenie był grzech naszego pierwego ojca, potrzebizna była, iżby uleczono było przez przyjęcie drugiego posłuszeństwa tego, iżby użyteczno było, eżby niekto przyjął naszą wszystkę służbę, ale żadny inny przyjaciel nie mógł, jedno ten, jenże jej nie miał, jakoż jest sam Bog, gdyż każde stworzenie jest służbie poddano. Tedy sam Bog za grzech *pychy* pierwego naszego ojca mógł dosyć uczynić, a człowieka wyzwolić.

[As Saint Gregory says, 'And since the sin and weakness of our first parents, Adam and Eve, were pride, gluttony, and disobedience, this evil was to be amended by obedience. Therefore, as claimed in point one, there could not have been no remedy for the pride of our first parents other than the death of Jesus Christ, for the rejection of every service and

obedience varies from case to case. And since the first father's sin was the rejection of all obedience, it was necessary that it is amended by choosing obedience that would be beneficial to us that someone takes on himself all our service, but no other friend could have done that but the one who has not served this duty, as he is God, while all creatures were made to serve. Then, God himself was able to remedy our first father's sin of pride and liberate man']. (*SCh* 2r/5–2v/4)

The author cites Gregory the Great, describing the tripartite structure of the first parents' sin and stressing their complicity. According to the preacher, the repercussions of the disobedience were to be remedied by compliance. The only form of compensation capable of removing the stain of the original sin (which was a consequence of Adam's and Eve's insubordination) was Jesus's death. Showing his compliance with the will of God the Father, Jesus took on the duties (service) of every human as an individual but also of all humanity in its totality. This excerpt shows the impact of exegesis, including Saint Augustine's on the hereditary burden of Eve's sin, on the legacy people received from their first parents (Żurek 2016, 149–50). Since every being was ordained for something even before it was born, the only person who could take on another duty was Jesus, the Son of God. Therefore, the sin of pride could have been amended only by God himself, leading straight to man's salvation from the shackles of sin and the snares of evil.

## Conclusions

Though rarely mentioned, the figures of Adam and Eve play an essential part in the Old Polish apocrypha of the New Testament. On the one hand, they are used as rhetorical characters, while on the other hand, authors use them in exegesis, like in *RP*, *ŻPJK*, or *HTK*. Their usefulness is not restricted to building the Eve – Mary and Adam – Jesus typology, though; in the case of both parents, the heritage they both left for humanity is emphasised. And although it is a legacy that most likely people would not accept willingly, it shapes all the subsequent events in the Judeo-Christian history of humankind. From the apocryphal foreshadowing of the coming of the Saviour that Seth heard about from Michael at the gates of the paradise, through the subsequent falls of men – Samson, David, Salomon, Peter; through the scenes of the annunciation to Saint Anne and Mary; to the conversations that Jesus held with his mother before giving himself up to death, in which he stressed the awareness of his destiny. Adam's role in the salvation of humans is also underlined in the scene of Jesus's death on the cross, which reopened the paradise gates for the people and also in the descent of the Resurrected to Sheol and the leading of the just ones who had been waiting in the dark for the arrival of light, which complements the work of salvation.



On the other hand, these particular antitheses have an immense catechetical value, building the world of the believers' values simply and using examples well-known to Christians from the pages of the Holy Scripture and present in the liturgy but also in the culture (carols, songs, rites, apocryphal texts), they explain the long story of salvation.

One should also bear in mind the excerpts pertaining to the original sin itself and the role of the first parents in its creation. It seems crucial that not only Eve's role is emphasised but also Adam's. Given the above, it is possible to bridge the figure of the forefather and Jesus, which is evident in, among others, excerpts on the tempting of Christ in the desert.

*Translated by Joanna Zahorska*

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